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Tell 'dirty tricks' by FBI against Nazis here

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WASHINGTON — The Chicago office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation engaged in "dirty tricks" against the city's branch of the American Nazi Party in an effort to neutralize it, newly released FBI documents show.

The Chicago office leaked information to national party officials, and perhaps the press, that the father of Frank Collin, the Chicago party chief, was a Jew. This previously secret fact led to Collin's expulsion from the party. He later set up a rival group, the National Socialist Party of America.

The FBI also sent an anonymous letter to Collin's superiors at Nazi national headquarters in Arlington, Va., accusing him of disloyalty to the party's leaders.

FBI agents, the new files show, also worked closely with the Chicago Police Department in harassing local Nazis. On at least one occasion, an FBI tip about Nazi activities led to the April 19, 1970, arrest of Collin and four of his followers, who were found in possession of weapons.

These disclosures became public last week after the FBI released 52,000 heavily censored pages from its COINTELPRO files, following a freedom-of-information request.

COINTELPRO was the code name for an FBI program that called for harassment, disruption and discrediting of dissident domestic political groups during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Probably the most devastating thing the FBI did to Collin was to inform the national Nazi leadership of his Jewish past. In a letter signed "a friend and national socialist," the FBI Chicago office told Nazi national leader, Matt Koehl, that Collin was bad-mouthing him and other leaders behind their backs and making "traitorous" comments.

The leadership did not respond to the anonymous letter, however, so the Chicago office sent a second one in which it disclosed Collin's Jewish past, pointing out that anyone who looked at his nose could tell he was Jewish.

The FBI considered Collin to be the financial and driving force behind Nazi activities in Illinois. An Oct. 23, 1969, memo said "Knowledge that (Collin) is partially Jewish to his associates and Arlington should eliminate his activities."

The files also say, after noting that the information was leaked to the national Nazi leadership: "The news media picked this up subsequently and Collin has been discredited and ridiculed in the press to a considerable degree."

On April 22, 1970, all major Chicago newspapers ran the story that Collin's father, Max Cohen, was a German Jew who had changed his name to Collin. The following June, Collin was expelled from the Nazi Party.